

Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Division of Wildlife Conservation

Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration  
Annual Performance Report  
Survey-Inventory Activities  
1 July 1997 – 30 June 1998

ELK

Mary V. Hicks, Editor

Grant W-27-1  
Study 13.0  
September 1998

**Project Title:** Southeast Elk Population Management

**Project Location:** Unit 3 (3,000 mi<sup>2</sup>)

All islands west of Unit 1B, north of Unit 2, south of the centerline of Frederick Sound, and east of the centerline of Chatham Strait

**Project Objectives and Activities:**

- Provide for growth of the transplanted elk herd to 900–1000 animals.
- Provide for all beneficial uses of elk consistent with sustained yield management when the herd reaches 250 elk.

**Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period:** We issued 27 elk drawing permits and 2 public raffle permits for the October hunt. We monitored hunting activity during the season. Teeth were collected from 8 harvested elk for aging and antlers were measured and photographed. Two of the harvested elk were yearlings, 3 were 2–4 years old, and 3 were 5–8 years old. No aerial surveys were conducted during this report period.

On April 1–2, ADF&G and Forest Service personnel monitored 54 elk winter range transects on Etolin Island. The transects were last monitored in 1991. Results of the monitoring indicate elk use (pellets per plot) doubled, while deer use decreased by half. Most plots still had 1–50% *Vaccinium* cover and were not heavily affected by elk, except in some concentrated bedding areas on small hilltops.

**Progress Meeting Project Objectives:** The Unit 3 elk population is currently estimated between 250–300 animals. Twenty-five permit holders harvested 8 bull elk in 144 days afield, for a 32% success rate.

**Segment Period Project Costs:**

	<u>Personnel</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>Total</u>
Planned	18.8	12.5	31.3
Actual	10.2	8.3	18.5
Difference	8.6	4.2	12.8

*Explanation:* Costs for running the new hunt were less than expected. Anticipated fieldwork was not conducted.

**Submitted by:**

Bruce Dinneford  
Management Coordinator

**Project Title:** Southcentral Alaska Elk Management

**Project Location:** Unit 8 (5,100 mi<sup>2</sup>)

**Project Objectives:**

- Maintain a minimum population of at least 1000 elk for all user groups.
- Maintain harvests within sustainable yield levels of the elk population.
- Develop population objectives for each major subherd.

**Work Accomplished During the Project Segment Period:** We completed aerial sex and age composition surveys during August and September 1997. We also did both aerial and foot surveys for the Raspberry Island herd. We classified 162 elk on Raspberry Island (22 bulls, 96 cows, 44 calves). On Afognak Island 563 elk were classified (31 bulls, 402 cows, and 130 calves). The calf:cow ratio for Raspberry Island was 45:100 and 35:100 for Afognak Island. The bull:cow ratio was 8:100 for Afognak and 23:100 for Raspberry Island. The total prehunt population in 1997 was estimated at 1355 elk.

Mandatory permit reports returned by hunters provided statistics on hunting effort and harvest. We issued 1195 permits; 777 hunters reported going into the field, taking 176 elk (102 males, 74 females). The harvest by permit hunt was as follows: Raspberry Island drawing permit hunt, 8 males, 21 females; southeastern Afognak drawing permit hunt, 59 males, 39 females; southeastern Afognak registration permit hunt, 5 males, 4 females; northern Afognak registration permit hunt, 35 males, 14 females.

We issued no emergency orders to close registration hunts in 1997. Although we expected a closure would be needed for herds accessible from the logging roads, allowable harvest goals for those herds were not reached by the season's end on November 30.

Hunting effort increased from 408 hunters afield in 1995 to 591 hunters in 1996 and to 777 hunters in 1997. Total harvest increased from 96 elk in 1995 to 136 elk in 1996 and to 176 elk in 1997.

The total harvest from drawing and registration permit hunts by herd for Afognak Island was as follows: Duck Mountain - 21; Portage Lake - 8; Seal Bay - 6; Marka Lake - 9; Waterfall Lake - 22; Malina Lakes-Afognak Lake - 61; location not specified - 17.

**Progress Meeting Project Objectives:** The elk population increased steadily since 1993 when low bull:cow ratios and a declining trend in the population prompted more conservative regulations. The elk population was estimated at 1355 animals in 1997, above the 1000 elk objective. The reported 1997 harvest of 176 elk equaled 13% of the estimated population, an increase over the 10% estimated rate in 1996. During a comparable increasing trend in the 1980s some herds sustained harvest rates of at least 15%.

**Segment Period Project Costs:**

	<u>Personnel</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>Total</u>
Planned	19.5	6.0	25.5
Actual	19.5	6.0	25.5
Difference	0.0	0.0	0.0

**Submitted by:**

Michael G. McDonald  
Assistant Management Coordinator